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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ANKARA 007067

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [IZ](#) [ECON](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE'S
JANUARY 2-3 VISIT TO TURKEY

(U) Classified by Charge d'Affaires a.i. Robert Deutsch, E.O.
12958, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) You arrive at a time when Turkey, having secured a 2005 start date for EU accession negotiations, will have begun to wake up warily to the enormous challenges entailed by harmonization. You arrive as well in a Turkey where much of the public, fed massive, continuing disinformation by an antagonistic media -- stoked by ill-considered remarks by PM Erdogan, FM Gul and other ruling AKP figures -- emotionally views the U.S. operation in Iraq as against their interests, and broadly considers the U.S. a threat to world peace. We will need to recalibrate our engagement with our ally Turkey occupying strategic geopolitical and societal spaces, in light of the experience of the past three years.

12. (C) Despite the deep resentment and suspicion of AKP by a waning Kemalist elite, Erdogan appears unassailable: he has a two-thirds majority in parliament; he remains highly popular; his government continues to reform Turkey's political and social space -- at least on the books; and he has pursued an activist all-points foreign policy.

13. (C) In this context Erdogan knows that maintaining good relations with the U.S. is important. He has had his government take verbal steps to reaffirm the relationship, but he has demonstrated no vision how to re-energize and expand relations from Turkey's side. FM Gul, at heart a Sunni Islamist despite his smile and seeming reasonable manner, is much more problematic. President Sezer is a narrow-minded statist with a tin ear for politics in general and a demonstrated lack of enthusiasm for good relations with the U.S. in particular -- he maneuvered to prevent U.S. troop deployment through Turkey prior to OIF. CHOD Ozkok is a solidly pro-Atlanticist senior commander; he has moved step-by-step to try to bring more modern thinkers into senior ranks, but nationalist, anti-Atlanticist sentiments are strong at lower ranks.

Security relations

14. (C) Iraq is a major preoccupation of Turks in and out of government and will be first on your interlocutors, agenda with you. The GOT shares our goals for Iraq -- a secure and stable, democratic country, united and territorially whole -- but our action in Iraq has always been unpopular in Turkey. Concerns about the ethnic balance in and future of Kirkuk, Kurdish desires for independence, our lack of action against the terrorist PKK/Kongra Gel camps in northern Iraq and perceived discrimination against Turkmen underpinned the irresponsible statements by AKP leaders and spreading anti-Americanism sparked by sensationalist and grossly distorted media reporting about the Fallujah operation and continued attacks on Turkish truck drivers.

15. (C) While the government took a couple of measures to contain the damage to our relationship prior to the EU summit, perceptions persist that we caused massive civilian casualties, including in Fallujah; that we tolerate Kurdish designs to seize Kirkuk and break away; and that the US acquiescence to (or supports) the PKK's presence in Iraq. All of this remains true despite continuing broad efforts by the Mission to hold the GOT and the media to a strict standard of fact in their statements. Nonetheless, Turkey has provided valuable assistance and cooperation, for which you should express appreciation. Ankara offered to send peacekeeping troops to Iraq in October 2003, approved the use of Incirlik Air Base for tankers to refuel aircraft on support missions for both Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), authorized the transit of US troops from Iraq on rotation out, and permits the transit of supplies for our forces and humanitarian goods. The GOT has reached out to all major Iraqi groups to encourage participation in elections on January 30. Turkey is also active in reconstruction efforts, including providing electricity for Iraq, and training in Turkey of Iraqi diplomats and, as its contribution to the NATO training mission, Iraqi security forces.

16. (C) Iraq impacts our entire bilateral security relationship. Our senior-most military leaders have worked hard to repair the damage caused by Turkey's failure to approve passage of the 4th ID in March 2003 and our arrest of

Turkish Special Forces personnel in Suleymania on July 4 of that year. Nonetheless, the relationship remains fragile. Recent requests to increase our use of Incirlik AB (e.g., establish a logistics air hub, increase training deployments) have been delayed as Turkish officials consider them part and parcel with the idea that we might move F-16s permanently to the base as part of the Defense Posture Review Initiative. You could inform your interlocutors that we understand that moving the F-16s to Turkey is a non-starter for the foreseeable future. This could allow movement on the other proposals.

17. (C) The public and official preoccupation with Iraq overshadows the positive cooperation we have in other aspects of the GWOT: Since 9/11 and the November 2003 Istanbul attacks, our traditional intelligence and law enforcement cooperation has improved. Our militaries coordinate assistance to Georgia and Azerbaijan, improving their abilities to protect important energy transportation routes. Turkey subscribes to every arms control arrangement it is eligible to join, including the Proliferation Security Initiative. Ankara has been supportive of international efforts to press Iran to meet its commitments to the IAEA, although they are more inclined to persuasion than coercion. The Turkish military's Partnership for Peace Training Center provides counterterrorism and other training to personnel from PFP partner countries. The military has recently established a NATO Center of Excellence for the Combat Against Terrorism that will provide more specialized training opportunities for both NATO partner nations and alliance members. And Turkey will again assume the command of ISAF in Afghanistan in February for a six-month period during which they will significantly increase their contribution to this important NATO mission.

Human Rights

18. (U) Over the past three years, Turkey has adopted eight wide-ranging packages of legal reforms and two sets of constitutional amendments aimed at meeting EU-related human rights standards. The legal reforms are designed to crack down on torture, loosen restrictions on speech and assembly, reduce the political influence of the military, and expand religious freedom. While the GOT has moved with impressive speed at the legislative level, real change has been much slower to take root. Elements of the military, police, judiciary, and bureaucracy have criticized some of the reforms as threats to national security, and have resisted implementation. In some cases, bureaucratic offices have drafted highly restrictive implementing legislation. For example, Parliament lifted restrictions on Kurdish language broadcasting, but the subsequent Radio and Television Board regulation set strict time limits and restricted such broadcasts to state-owned media outlets.

19. (SBU) Turkey faces a long, difficult path to full EU membership. Many here do not recognize how wrenching the changes ahead will be. The EU has made it clear that it expects accession talks with Turkey will take at least 10 years, and a number of Turkish officials privately acknowledge the GOT will need that time to adopt the full EU acquis. Turkey is expected to face difficulty in a number of areas, including environmental standards. In addition to adopting new laws and regulations, EU contacts tell us that during the accession process Turkey will have to revise some of the recently adopted human rights legislation, which falls short of EU standards in some respects.

10. (U) On trafficking in persons the Turkish authorities have been slow to respond to a chronic problem, but the opening of a TIP shelter (attended by Secretary Powell) and recent establishment of a victim hotline show that Turkey is beginning to make coherent progress.

11. (C) Despite statements designed to encourage hope, Turkish authorities -- both governmental and in the State bureaucracy -- continue to refuse to reopen the Ecumenical Patriarchate's Halki Seminary, closed since 1971. Using a false reading of the 1923 Lausanne Treaty, Turkish authorities also continue to refuse to acknowledge the ecumenical status of the Patriarchate. Although Turkish authorities portray property restitution for the Greek and Armenian Orthodox communities as proceeding well, the communities report the process continues to be subject to bureaucratic delay and arbitrary rulings.

Regional Issues

12. (C) Under the influence of Gul, Turkey has sought to improve relations with Iran and with Arab neighbors, including Syria, over the past year. Erdogan visited Iran in July 2004 and visits Syria December 22-23.

13. (C) At the same time Turkey still views itself as a

potential mediator between Israel and the Palestinians, but has so far failed to produce any results. Turkish/Israeli relations cooled in 2004 when PM Erdogan referred to Israeli actions in Palestinian territory as "state terror" and as the Turkish General Staff became convinced that Israel is pursuing a pro-Kurdish policy in northern Iraq. For now, economic relations and intel cooperation remain strong, and FM Gul is to visit Israel and the Palestinians the last week in December.

14. (C) Turkey made a major policy shift on Cyprus to support the Annan Plan in spring 2004, but feels doubly aggrieved because little has been done to ease the economic isolation of the Turkish Cypriots and because the EU summit effort to obtain Turkish recognition of the Republic of Cyprus shows the Greek Cypriots will increasingly have an upper hand. We expect Turkey to seek new UN initiatives to drive home the settlement in the new year.

15. (C) Relations with Greece continue to warm, despite recent Greek complaints about Turkish air activity in the Aegean. Greece gave firm public support to Turkey's EU candidacy.

16. (C) Trade relations with Russia have ballooned in the past several years. Turkey is strongly dependent on Russian natural gas; during his December visit Putin reminded the Turks of their energy dependence on Russia and proffered a strategic partnership alternative to Turkey's ties with the U.S. and EU. Turkey has strong ties to Azerbaijan and backs Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute. Turkey will not open its border with Armenia or restore diplomatic relations absent Armenian recognition of the border with Turkey and concessions on occupied Azerbaijani territories. The Turks publicly support Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, but have not been forceful vis-a-vis Russian designs in Georgia.

Economy

17. (U) The Turkish economy has recovered strongly from the financial crisis of 2000-2001 and is growing at an annual pace of around 8-9 percent. However, the recovery remains vulnerable due to a large current account deficit (about 5 percent of GDP) and a large debt with a short maturity structure. Unemployment and poverty remain high, and ordinary people have not felt much benefit yet from the overall macroeconomic improvement. Macroeconomic success has also bred a sense of complacency about the need to persist with difficult reforms, such as privatization, and reform of the banking, social security and tax systems. These reforms are being addressed in the new three-year standby program which the IMF and GOT have just agreed to.

18. (U) Due to historic economic/political volatility and opaque regulatory/judicial systems, Turkey has long received less foreign direct investment than other countries of similar size and potential. Many in the Turkish elite are convinced that there will be a flood of foreign investment if the Turks get a date for EU accession negotiations later this month. However, this is unlikely to materialize unless more is done in the area of structural reform. In addition, there appears to be a lack of appreciation for the enormous challenges Turkey will shoulder in the accession negotiations, for the fact that EU accession will affect nearly aspect of their lives, and that it may in the end be quite costly for Turkey to comply with EU directives in environmental protection and other areas.

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